

Bakken is one of the world's fastest drivers in the push start.

TWO years ago **CPT Scott Price** knew little about police work, fighting fires or dealing with mass casualties. Now the 31-year-old Virginia Army National Guard soldier and company commander helps police supervisors, fire chiefs and emergency medical supervisors across the country respond to crises created by weapons of mass destruction.

For months before the Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City, Utah, Price helped the various groups prepare for security—a phenomenal undertaking, given the events of Sept. 11. Olympic officials considered virtually every possible avenue of approach terrorists or copycat criminals could take.

Price is one of a dozen certified instructors for the National Sheriffs' Association who train emergency-responder executives to respond to their worst nightmares—a nuclear explosion, poison gas or deadly organisms intended to hurt or kill a mass of people or disrupt normal activities.

Two-member teams have trained emergency responder managers in 30 states during the past two-and-a-half years, said retired New Jersey policeman Ed Willevier, the sheriff association's project director.

Price, a full-time Guard officer, is also telling leaders of this country's civilian emergency agencies how the National Guard's new state civil support teams are prepared to help them cope with a crisis as bad as or worse than the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11.

"I don't have a background in emergency services," said Price, who graduated from the Virginia Military Institute with a degree in history and English. "It's been quite an education for me since I took on this job in 1999. I've learned that no one person or agency has all the answers. We all have to work together to keep our communities safe." — **MSG Bob Haskell, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs Office**



Price: Training first responders.

EVERY seasoned athlete appreciates the home-court advantage, especially when a championship is on the line. Utah Army National Guard **SPC Jill Bakken** is no exception. Park City, Utah, is where she lives with her mother. And in February she competed in the championship of her life, the two-woman bobsled, during the XIX Winter Olympics there.

"We have the home-court advantage, and we'll take advantage of that," said Bakken, who drove one of the United States' two women's sleds during the Salt Lake City Games that began on Feb. 8.

Her home court at the Utah Olympic Park is a twisting, steeply banked ribbon of smooth ice that is eight-tenths of a mile long and plunges 341 feet from top to bottom.

The sleek sleds hit speeds of 80 to 90 miles per hour and pull four or five times the force of gravity while careening through the lower turns during runs that last less than 50 seconds.

Bakken, a member of the Army's World-Class Athlete Program, is one of three Army Guard athletes who have made U.S. bobsled teams. **Mike Kohn**, from Virginia, and **Dan Steele**, from Oregon, are part of the four-man U.S. Army team piloted by civilian **Brian Shimer**.

Bakken joined the Utah Guard's 115th Engineer Group headquarters in March 2000 before becoming an Army world-class athlete.

Men's bobsledding is to the Winter Olympics what swimming is to the Summer Games. Women's bobsledding, however, became an Olympic sport for the first time this year, and competitors appeared before an estimated 12,000 spectators and a worldwide television audience.

"We train here all the time," Bakken said before the competition. "The big difference, of course, will be the crowds. I'll have to channel my energy to make it a positive experience instead of getting nervous about so many people."

Bakken is an eight-year bobsledding veteran. Born in Portland, Ore., she joined the U.S. national team in 1994, when she was a high-school junior. That made her the youngest bobsledder in the history of the com-



Bobsled driver Jill Bakken (left) and brakewoman Vernetta Flowers trained together for the Winter Olympics held in Park City, Utah.

petition, according to Olympic officials.

She has since earned a reputation as one of the top drivers on the women's World Cup tour that began in winter 1997, and she's regarded as one of the world's fastest drivers in the push start.

Two victories helped account for her best World Cup season in 1999-2000. She finished second in the overall standings to American Jean Racine, who, at press time, was to drive the number one U.S. women's sled during the Winter Games.

Bakken and her new brakewoman, Vernetta Flowers, a seven-time All-American sprinter and long jumper from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, posted the fastest start times during both nights of the U.S. trials, with times of 5.37 and 5.39 seconds, respectively.

Although they had raced together in Calgary only twice before the trials, Bakken and Flowers knocked three-time Olympic luger and women's bobsled pioneer Bonny Warner out of Olympic contention.

They are now one of the world's fastest-starting teams, and Flowers said that fact would be critical to their success.

"This is a relatively short track," she said. "The start will be more crucial here than on a lot of other tracks."

"We're still new to each other, so there's a lot of room for improvement before the Games," Flowers said in January. "I'm excited to see what happens then." — **MSG Bob Haskell, NGB PAO**

WHEN she awakens in the morning, she hurries to get ready for school. Each night she purposely sets her alarm clock for 6:15 a.m. so she can push the snooze button a few times and still be awake by 6:45 and to school by 8 a.m.

"I used to think that time moved fast in Bosnia," said **Jasmina Spahic**. "But not anymore."

The 25-year-old Bosnian woman, nicknamed Jazz by her American friends, was born in Zvornik, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and reared in Tuzla. She now lives in Temple, Texas, where she's been adjusting to American life since last spring.

In 1999 Spahic was working in Tuzla with American troops supporting the NATO peacekeeping effort. She spent a year and a half working as a translator and tour guide before she met Texas Army National Guard 1LT Joseph D. Hansen, who was deployed to Bosnia for two weeks to support the redeployment of the Texas Guard's 49th Armored Division.

Hansen, a bank president in Temple, noted that Spahic was an extremely intelligent young woman who, as a tour guide in Tuzla, wasn't fully using her talents.

"She needed access to an education," said Hansen,



Spahic (left): Dream come true in America.

who called his wife, Luci, to tell her about Spahic and what he thought they should do for her.

"When Joseph first explained his idea to bring Jazz to the states for a college education, it was a bit of a shock," Luci said. "But he told me how bright she was and how he thought this was a great opportunity to help someone. So I supported him, knowing that he wouldn't make an unwise decision for our family."

It took Spahic only one day to decide that she wanted to go to America to study business and live with an American family.

So the three of them began working to make the move happen.

Luci, a faculty member at Central Texas College in Killeen, immediately began the college enrollment process on Spahic's behalf. Joseph began the paperwork for her student visa through the embassy in Sarajevo, Bosnia. When the embassy denied his initial request, he continued to push the issue, assuring officials that his family would be dependable sponsors.

"They wanted proof of marriage, financial stability and an extensive amount of background information," Joseph said. "Between complications with the embassy, communications problems among the different agencies involved and passport difficulties, it's a miracle she made it over here at all."

Nine months after the decision to come to the United States, Spahic made it.

Spahic, who survived five years of war in Bosnia, said she's always had a good feeling about America and it's always been her dream to come here.

"When I reached Dallas, this wonderful family was waiting for me," she added. "And the first time I began to cry, this amazing American woman, Luci, was there. She's always been there when I've needed her. I'm so grateful to her and Joseph. I can't even begin to talk about how wonderful they are." — **SPC Luke Elliott, Texas National Guard PAO**

